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SUBJECT: PRC DEMARCHE ON POSSIBLE DALAI LAMA VISIT

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor  
Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) PRC Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei met with Acting DCM Bill Weinstein the evening of June 29 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deliver a demarche protesting the possibility of a visit to the United States by the Dalai Lama in order to meet with senior U.S. officials. VFM He, who speaks fluent English, noted that he was on "sensitive, pressing and important" instructions from senior Chinese leaders and delivered the message reading in Chinese from a four-page prepared text.

¶2. (C) VFM He stated that China had repeatedly made stern representations on the issue of visits to the United States by the Dalai Lama. During recent telephone conversations, FM Yang had discussed the issue with Secretary Clinton and VFM He had himself raised it with Deputy Secretary Steinberg. "Regrettably," VFM He said, the United States was "still making excuses" for the Dalai Lama to visit the United States and, to date, the U.S. government had not made any direct response to China's representations on the issue.

¶3. (C) The Tibet issue concerned China's sovereignty, territorial integrity and core interests, VFM He continued. Tibet had never been historically independent, yet "anti-China forces" had never ceased acts intended to separate Tibet from China. The United States had also repeatedly interfered in China's internal affairs by publicly referring to the Tibet issue and the U.S. Congress had passed a number of Tibet-related "anti-China" bills. The establishment of a Special Coordinator for Tibet Issues, the activities of the National Endowment for Democracy and the year-by-year increases of U.S. government funds supporting "Tibet independence objectives" had emboldened the Dalai Lama group and enabled Tibet separatists to act in a reckless manner, particularly in the period surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympic games, VFM He said. The Chinese government firmly opposed such acts which had also outraged the Chinese people.

¶4. (C) The U.S. claimed the Dalai Lama was not calling for Tibet independence but rather advocating for autonomy, VFM He said. However the Dalai Lama had never recognized the current system in Tibet. Rather, he sought to restore a theocracy in a "greater Tibet" that occupied one quarter of China's territory and had no historical basis. The Dalai Lama remained the head of the so called Tibet government-in-exile which consistently claimed Tibet independence as its goal. In talks with the Chinese government, the Dalai Lama's representatives ignored the sincere goodwill of the Chinese government in order to retain their political demands for independence, or "semi-independence in disguise." In November, 2008 they stopped contacts with the Chinese government and conditioned the resumption of talks on the Chinese government's acceptance of a memorandum with splittist elements. "How is this not insistence on Tibet independence?" VFM He asked

rhetorically.

¶15. (C) VFM He claimed that the current system in Tibet protected human rights, religious freedom and Tibet's cultural traditions and had achieved rapid improvements in the economic and social conditions for all Tibetans. The Chinese government's differences with the Dalai Lama did not concern ethnic, human rights or religious issues but rather major principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. No one should have any illusions that China will back down or "trade on its principles," VFM He said. The Chinese government opposed meetings or contact with the Dalai Lama in any capacity by officials of any country. The Dalai Lama had not used his past visits to the United States to preach peace or explain religion but to disseminate ideas on Tibet independence, VFM He asserted.

¶16. (C) VFM said that the United States and China were engaged in intensive preparations for upcoming high level exchanges, and urged the United States "not to jeopardize these goals." The United States should "correct past mistakes" in the interests of the peoples of both countries. In keeping with past U.S. statements recognizing Tibet as part of China, the government of China urged the United States to prevent disruptions to bilateral relations by not allowing any visits by the Dalai Lama, much less any meeting with President Obama, VFM He said.

¶17. (C) A/DCM Weinstein stated that the United States respected the territorial integrity of China and considered Tibet to be a part of China. Nonetheless, senior U.S. officials would continue to consider requests for meetings by

BEIJING 00001802 002 OF 002

the Dalai Lama in keeping with his status as a respected spiritual leader. A/DCM Weinstein also noted that restrictions on visits to Tibet by U.S. diplomats made it difficult to develop an accurate picture of conditions in the Tibet Autonomous Region. He cited the inability of personnel from the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu to obtain permission to visit Tibet, despite repeated requests, and urged the Chinese government to grant consular access to Tibet.

¶18. (C) In a pull aside after the demarche, VFM He reiterated to the A/DCM the seriousness of the message and noted the interest of high-level Chinese officials in this issue.

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